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[American Association for the Advancement of Science](#)

AAAS concerned over House inquiry of climate scientists

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has expressed deep concern about a congressional demand for detailed documentation on the scientific work and professional history of three researchers whose studies suggest temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere are warmer than they have been for a thousand years.

In a July 13 letter to U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner said the committee's requests to the researchers for information not only on their recent studies but also their life's work "give the impression of a search for some basis on which to discredit these particular scientists and findings, rather than a search for understanding."

The research by climate scientists Michael Mann of the University of Virginia, Raymond Bradley of the University of Massachusetts and Malcolm Hughes of the University of Arizona provided support for the 2001 finding by a United Nations-sponsored panel that Northern Hemisphere temperatures rose significantly during the last part of the 20th century. Many scientific experts attribute that warming, at least in part, to the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases by human industrial activity.

Leshner told Barton the AAAS appreciates the committee's interest in the important field of climate change studies. "While we fully understand that the policy-making functions of Congress require integrating the best available understanding of relevant science with other considerations," Leshner wrote, "we think it would be unfortunate if Congress tried to become a participant in the scientific review-process itself."

Leshner added that aggressive congressional inquiry into the professional history of scientists whose work "may bear on policy in ways that some find unpalatable" could have a chilling effect on their willingness to explore scientific questions with policy implications.

Other investigators have come to conclusions similar to those of Mann, Bradley and Hughes, Leshner said. Studies challenging the trio's findings also have been published. "This point-counterpoint process is how science normally progresses," wrote Leshner, who also serves as Executive Publisher of the journal *Science*. "There is nothing about

the way it is proceeding in this particular case that ought to arouse Congressional concern about federally-funded climate science or climate science in general."

Barton (R-Texas) also sent a letter to the National Science Foundation requesting information on the work of the three researchers and a list of all grants and awards the foundation has made during the past 10 years in the area of climate and paleoclimate science. According to a report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, that involves 2,700 grants and awards.

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Read Leshner's letter at: <http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2005/0714letter.pdf>

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the world's largest general scientific society, and publisher of the journal, *Science* (www.sciencemag.org). AAAS was founded in 1848, and includes some 262 affiliated societies and academies of science, serving 10 million individuals. *Science* has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world, with an estimated total readership of one million.